

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 05559 141807Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1636

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5559

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BL

SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS: ROLE OF VICTOR PAZ

1. I HAD A LONG CONVERSATION LATE LAST NIGHT WITH VICTOR PAZ REGARDING THE STATE OF THE BOLIVIAN ELECTORAL PROCESS. THE PAZ VIEW WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S AND MILITARY'S BLATANT INTERVENTION IN THE VOTING AND THE VOTE TABULATION PROCESS HAD DISCREDITED A PEREDA WIN BY DIRECT ELECTION. IN PAZ' VIEW, THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID CREATION OF TOTALLY WEAK GOVERNMENT AND POLARIZATION OF BOLIVIAN POLITICS WAS:

(1) TO GET THE ELECTORAL COURT TO CLEAN UP THE VOTING RESULT BY ANNULING A LARGE NUMBER OF SUSPECT VOTES AND (2) TO PUT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION INTO THE CONGRESS WHERE A COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO EMERGE. PAZ WAS CONFIDENT THAT A CONSCIENTIOUS COMPLETION OF THE FIRST STEP WOULD NECESSARILY PRODUCE THE SECOND. PAZ THOUGHT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S STATEMENT OF JULY 13, WHICH WAS CARRIED ON LOCAL RADIO AT 8:00 P.M., WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL IN PRESSURING THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ELECTORAL COURT TO CLEAN UP THE VOTING TABULATION.

2. I TOLD PAZ THAT, WHILE I AGREED WITH HIS CONCLUSION, I SAW TWO PROBLEMS IN GETTING THERE. THE FIRST WAS THE ELECTORAL COURT APPARENTLY DID NOT FEEL IT HAD THE POLITICAL BACKING NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT A THOROUGH CLEAN-UP JOB WITHOUT A NEW MANDATE FROM  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 05559 141807Z

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES. SECOND, I DOUBTED THE MILITARY WOULD GIVE SUCH A MANDATE TO THE COURT IF THEY FELT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE CONGRESS WOULD PRODUCE THE CERTAIN RESULT OF A THREE-PARTY COALITION WITH HERNAN SILES AS PRESIDENT--AND THIS WAS THE CONCLUSION THE MILITARY HAD DRAWN FROM THE COMBINED SILES-PAZ-BERNAL DECLARATION OF JULY 12. I THOUGHT, THEREFORE, THAT PAZ OR BERNAL BOTH MIGHT HAVE TO

OPEN UP THIS POSSIBILITY BY LETTING THE MILITARY KNOW THEY WOULD APPROACH COALITION NEGOTIATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES WITH AN OPEN MIND, IF, AND ONLY IF, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES JOINED IN A CLEAR APPEAL TO THE ELECTORAL COURT TO CARRY OUT A THOROUGH REVIEW AND CLEAN UP THE VOTING RESULT. PAZ SAID HE AGREED THAT HIS SHOULD BE DONE BUT MADE NO COMMITMENT AS TO WHAT HE WOULD DO OR NOT DO. PAZ SAID THAT THE THREE PARTY STATEMENT MAY HAVE INADVERTENTLY ENCUMBERED THE SITUATION. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT ITS INTENT WAS NOT TO PRECLUDE COALITION NEGOTIATIONS IN THE CONGRESS BUT RATHER TO PREVENT PEREDA, IF HE TOOK THE ELECTION BY A SUSPECT POPULAR VOTE MAJORITY, FROM PICKING OFF ONE OF THE THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS A VERY JUNIOR GOVERNING PARTNER, THEREBY GIVING AN AURA OF LEGITIMACY TO A GOVERNMENT IN WHICH PEREDA WOULD CALL ALL THE SHOTS.

3. PAZ SAID ALMOST WISTFULLY THAT IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HE HAD INTENTIONALLY GONE EASY ON PEREDA AND THE MILITARY PRECISELY BECAUSE HE WANTED TO KEEP OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF COLLABORATION SHOULD PEREDA FALL SHORT OF A MAJORITY IN THE POPULAR VOTE AND THE CONGRESS. IN RECOGNITION OF THIS PEREDA HAD EVEN PROMISED TO DIRECT THE FIRE OF HIS CAMPAIGN TO HERNAN SILES. NOW, HOWEVER, PAZ SAID THAT HE FELT HE HAD BEEN DOUBLED CROSSED. HE CLAIMED THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF HIS VOTES HAD BEEN STOLEN IN THE FOUR EASTERN DEPARTMENTS (SANTA CRUZ, TARIJA, BENI AND PANDO) AND BUT FOR THIS FRAUD HE WOULD HAVE WON AT LEAST TWO OF THESE DEPARTMENTS. HE  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LA PAZ 05559 141807Z

SAID, THEREFORE, ANY CLEAN UP OF THE VOTING RESULT SHOULD RE-OPEN THE TABULATION OF RETURNS FROM THESE DEPARTMENTS AS WELL AS LA PAZ AND POTOSI. PAZ SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT THE MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE GENERATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD PRESS THE MILITARY COMMAND TO INITIATE A CLEAN UP OF THE VOTE COUNT TO PROTECT THE HONOR OF THE INSTITUTION. HE FEARED, HOWEVER, THAT THE HIGH COMMAND WAS WORKING ITSELF INTO A PINOCHET MENTALITY AND THEREFOR A LOT OF PRESSURE WOULD BE NEEDED TO PUT THE GALLOPING ELECTORAL COUNT INTO REVERSE GEAR.  
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